

Jerusalem Post confirms Israel knew USS Liberty was American

Posted Nov 6, 2014 by [Ralph Lopez](#)

A 2004 transcript of an Israeli military tape published in the Jerusalem Post supports the unanimous position of the survivors and many high-ranking US officers that Israeli forces knew the USS Liberty was an American ship, as they attempted to sink it.

The Liberty was the only ship of its kind at the time, easily distinguishable for the huge satellite dishes mounted on its deck and the bristling array of antennae which served as the spy ship's "ears."



Two of 34 US Liberty dead.

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The survivors, and the audio tape on which the transcript is based, are presented in a new documentary which was broadcast on the Al Jazeera America channel last week. The audio tape has never been heard before by an American audience. The film "**The Day Israel Attacked America**" is directed and produced by British film maker Richard Belfield [*mp4 at USS Liberty survivors' website.*]

Israel has long maintained, with official US government inquiries agreeing, that the attack was a case of mistaken identity. However, a growing chorus of critics, and the USS Liberty survivors themselves, say the **official reports** are cover-ups of an incident in which American sailors were ruthlessly, deliberately attacked in order to draw the US into war with Egypt, by blaming it for the loss of the ship with all hands. Israel was engaged in the Six Day War with Egypt and other Arab states at the time.

The attack, which commenced on June 8th, 1967 at 1:58 p.m. local time with strafing runs by Israeli Mirage jet fighters, lasted for approximately two hours, after seven to nine reconnaissance flights over the Liberty by slow-moving Israeli patrol planes beginning at 5:30 a.m. Liberty survivors are unanimous in their conviction that the attackers knew the ship was American, and that they were trying hard to sink it. Expended over the course of the attack were over 800 rounds of 30mm cannon, air-to-surface rockets, heat-seeking missiles, napalm bombs, and five torpedoes.

In **the documentary**, during the course of the attack, at 2:14 p.m., 16 minutes after the first strafing run begins, voices of Israeli military controllers are heard to say, as the timeline is counted in the background:

"To what state does she belong?" (Answer): "American"

Supporting the authenticity of the tape, in 2004 the Jerusalem Post published what it said was a transcript of Israeli military transmissions directing the attack on the USS Liberty. In that transcript, at precisely the same time, 2:14pm, the exchange translated from Hebrew to English is reported:

"Kislev, what country?" (Answer): "Apparently American."

*[Jerusalem Post archives, "Exclusive: Liberty attack tapes revealed," June 3, 2004, by Arie O'Sullivan, **article copy**]*

The Post transcript ends with this transmission. However, the attack continued for another hour and a half. Twenty minutes after the indication of positive identification, an Israeli torpedo boat approaches and fires five torpedoes, one of which hits the starboard bow and nearly sinks the ship.

Although the Israeli government maintains to this day that the Liberty was mistaken for an Egyptian ship, the Israeli attack aircraft were unmarked. The Liberty survivors and the many skeptics of Israel's "accident" explanation point out that open warfare was already taking place at the time with Egypt, and there would be no reason to use aircraft with its markings meticulously painted over.

The matching timeline substantiates the authenticity of the tape broadcast, as raw audio with subtitled translation, by Al Jazeera America. The match indicates that the tape broadcast by Al Jazeera, and the tape on which the Jerusalem Post based its transcript, are the same.

The translated transcript of the raw audio published by the Post was made by a Post reporter who was allowed to listen to the tape. Even prior to the attack, Israeli military personnel are heard questioning whether the ship was American, at 1:53pm in the tape. In the Al Jazeera translation of the tape Israeli military personnel are heard saying in an intriguing exchange:

"Is it an American ship?" "What do you mean American?" "No comment."

As the torpedo hits 20 minutes after a ground controller acknowledges the ship is American, a voice is heard casually saying:

"The torpedo is talking care of the ship now."

In the Jerusalem Post transcript of the tape, no mention is made of a torpedo hitting the ship, although a torpedo hole is clearly visible in the ship's damage. The official Israeli Defense Forces report on the attack acknowledges the launch of torpedoes 25 minutes after the fact that the ship is American is mentioned (["IDF History Report: The Attack on the 'Liberty' Incident."](#))

After the torpedo hits, torpedo boats circle, machine-gunning the ship with armor-piercing projectiles for another 40 minutes. At 3:15 p.m., as lifeboats are lowered into the water, the Israelis pull up at close range and proceed to machine-gun the lifeboats. This is a full hour after confirmation has been given that the ship is American.

Sexual innuendo is heard in describing the actions of the Israeli military as the Liberty crew fights fires and tends to the wounded. Thirty-four US sailors were killed. As the attack controllers mull using napalm one asks "Do we screw her?"

The Post and Al Jazeera tape are but a small part of the volumes of evidence that Israel knew what it was doing that has yet to be released. [Steve Forslundan](#), who was an intelligence analyst for the 544th Air Reconnaissance Technical Wing at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, states that the real-time intelligence he was reading as the day progressed:

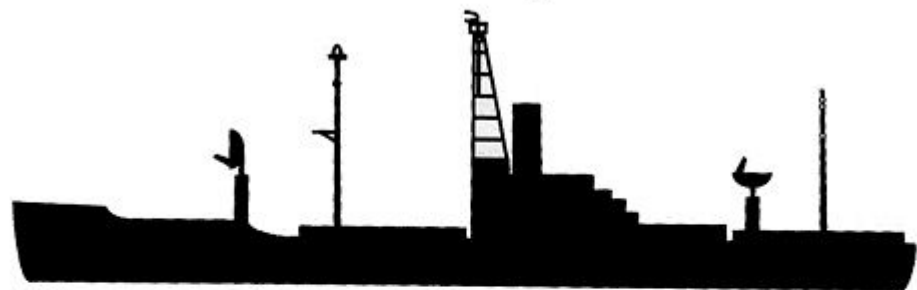
"made specific reference to the efforts to direct the jets to the target which was identified as American numerous times by the ground controller. Upon arrival, the aircraft specifically identified the target and mentioned the American flag she was flying. There were frequent operational transmissions from the pilots to the ground base describing the strafing runs. The ground control began asking about the status of the target and whether it was sinking. They stressed that the target must be sunk and leave no trace."

Prior to the airing of "The Day Israel Attacked America," a long list of public figures, including those of highest US military rank, have backed the survivors' contention that the Israelis meant to sink the Liberty knowing full well that the ship was American. These include **Secretary of State Dean Rusk**, who held that office at the time of the incident,

Director of the NSA Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, **US Senator Adlai Stevenson**, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas Moorer. Moorer concluded in his own investigation:

"In attacking the USS Liberty, Israel committed acts of murder against U.S. servicemen and an act of war against the United States."

Actual Proportions



USS Liberty

455 feet in length, 10,680 tons displacement



El Quiser

275 feet in length, 2,750 tons displacement

USS Liberty scale size profile in comparison to Egyptian ship which Israel maintains it was mistaken for.

<http://www.gtr5.com/>

Of the Israeli account, Secretary of State Rusk said in his memoirs:

"I didn't believe them then, and I don't believe them to this day."

NSA Director Bobby Ray Inman grants an interview in the film.

In 2007, in the article "New Revelations in Attack on American Spy Ship," the Chicago Tribune ran interviews of US intelligence officers who were following the Mediterranean radio traffic in real time, who said Israel was deliberately attacking an American ship. Air Force Capt. Richard Block, who was commanding an intelligence wing of more than 100 analysts and cryptologists monitoring Middle Eastern communications on the island of Crete, told the Tribune:

"The pilots said, 'This is an American ship. Do you still want us to attack?' And ground control came back and said, 'Yes, follow orders.'"

For its part, the official Israeli report holding that the attack was a "tragic accident" centers around the claim no flags were visible on the ship, which is vociferously denied by the survivors, who say they were flying multiple flags, in a proper breeze for unfurling. The other central Israeli claim is that orders were given that any ship observed traveling above a certain speed, 20 knots, was to be considered a hostile warship. The IDF report states that the Liberty was observed sailing at 28 knots. However, the report itself notes that the Liberty was not capable of such speeds, and calls it "astounding" that two different measurements of the speed were "incorrect" ([page 12, IDF History Report.](#))

As for the "why" of the attack, a non-governmental committee chaired by Admiral Moorer, which included former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia James E. Akins, theorized that the attack was intended to be blamed on Egypt, thereby drawing the US into Israel's Six Day War with Arab states in 1967. Supporting this were the facts that the Israelis clearly wanted the ship to sink, and that they used unmarked fighter aircraft.

Coincidentally, according to Admiral Lawrence Geis, who was commander of the US Mediterranean fleet on that day, the Sixth Fleet was undergoing a nuclear-armed drill at the time, in which warplanes were armed with live nuclear weapons. Geis said that he was ordered by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to recall flights of US fighter aircraft sent to assist the Liberty, twice, because President Lyndon B. Johnson in fact wanted the Liberty to sink, with all hands. It is speculated that Johnson then would have sent nuclear-tipped bombers into Egypt to retaliate for the sinking of the Liberty.



Cover page of official Israeli government report on USS Liberty attack.

<http://www.gtr5.com>

USS Liberty survivors still hold a commemoration event in Washington DC every year, and have pledged to try to continue to as long as any of them remain alive. The film is briskly-paced, with interviews of the survivors taking center stage.

The interviews recall harrowing moments as the Israeli Air Force and Navy conducted its organized and prolonged attack, after many previous hours of low-pass flyover surveillance in which Israeli pilots flew low enough to actually wave at American sailors.

Survivor Larry Weaver recalled an Israeli Air Force Nord 2501 circling the ship, and told former **ABC News investigative reporter James Bamford**:

"It had a big Star of David on it and it was flying just a little bit above our mast. I was actually able to wave to the co-pilot. He waved back and actually smiled at me - I could see him that well. There's no question about it. They had seen the ship's markings and the American flag. They could damn near see my rank."

In charge of the official US Navy Court of Inquiry report which drew the conclusion that the attack was an accident was Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., father of John McCain, the US senator and former presidential candidate.

The survivors continue to demand that the government acknowledge that Israel knowingly attacked an American ship.



2014 USS Liberty survivors memorial ceremony.
Richard Belfield

Previous production credits held by producer and director Richard Belfield include National Geographic TV, Discovery Channel, and Arts and Entertainment Network.

Documentary, The Day Israel Attacked America (Upload at Daily Motion) [mp4 at USS Liberty survivors' website.]

The Day Israel Attacked America (hidden histo...



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